

Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L MOSCOW 8142

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINT, UR
SUBJECT: ALLEGED BREZHNEV-SUSLOV RIVALRY AND ISSUES

REF: ZAGREB 475 (NOTAL)

SUMMARY: ACCORDING TO AN ACCOUNT SUPPOSEDLY BASED ON COMMENTS BY KATUSHEV'S DAUGHTER, SUSLOV OPPOSED THE NEW CONSTITUTION SPONSORED BY BREZHNEV AS WELL AS BREZHNEV'S PROPOSAL TO ABOLISH DESIGNATION OF NATIONALITY IN SOVIET INTERNAL PASSPORTS. DAUGHTER ALSO DESCRIBED THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN KATUSHEV AND PODGORNYY AS CLOSE AND REPORTED THAT BREZHNEV TAKES MEDICATION EVERY HOUR ON THE HOUR. END SUMMARY.

1. EMBOFF HAS HEARD A STORY STRIKINGLY SIMILAR TO ONE IN REFTEL RE ALLEGED BREZHNEV-SUSLOV RIVALRY INVOLVING CONSTITUTION AND ISSUANCE OF NEW "IDENTITY CARDS" PERMITTING SOVIET CITIZENS TO "TRAVEL FREELY THROUGHOUT SOVIET UNION." TROUBLE WITH VERSION OF ZAGREB'S SOURCE IS THAT LEADERSHIP DECISION TO ISSUE NEW INTERNAL PASSPORTS AND TO EXTEND RIGHT TO HOLD PASSPORTS TO KOLKHOZNIKS TOOK PLACE WELL OVER A YEAR AGO. IN ANY CASE, ISSUANCE OF NEW
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PASSPORTS DOES NOT ALTER RIGHT OF PASSPORT HOLDERS TO TRAVEL FREELY WITHIN SOVIET UNION.

2. 2. OUR SOURCE IS A MOSCOW ACTOR (AN ESTABLISHED CONTACT) WHO HAS A FRIEND ON CLOSE TERMS WITH KATUSHEV'S DAUGHTER WITH WHOM HE IS "QUITE POSSIBLY HAVING AN AFFAIR." ACCORDING TO DAUGHTER (DESCRIBED AS AN INDEPENDENT, STRONG-MINDED WOMAN IN HER

LATE TWENTIES), BREZHNEV'S PRINCIPAL ADVERSARY WITHIN THE LEADERSHIP IS SUSLOV. APPARENTLY, MATTERS CAME TO A HEAD BETWEEN THEM BECAUSE BREZHNEV WAS PUSHING THE CONSTITUTION STRONGLY AND ALSO ADVOCATING REMOVAL OF NATIONALITY FROM INTERNAL PASSPORTS, LEAVING DESIGNATION SIMPLY THAT OF "CITIZEN OF USSR." SUSLOV REPORTEDLY OPPOSED BOTH MEASURES: THE CONSTITUTION BECAUSE IT ELEVATED IMAGE OF BREZHNEV AND DISTRACTED ATTENTION FROM 60TH ANNIVERSARY OF OCTOBER; AND THE ELIMINATION OF NATIONALITY FROM INTERNAL PASSPORTS BECAUSE THIS WAS UNACCEPTABLE AND ALARMING TO THE UNION REPUBLICS.

3. IN ANY CASE, DISPUTE BETWEEN BREZHNEV AND SUSLOV RESULTED IN SUSLOV BEING ASSIGNED RESPONSIBILITY FOR SPONSORING THE CHANGES IN THE NATIONAL ANTHEM AT THE PLENUM -- A HUMILIATINGLY MINOR ROLE FOR AN OLD PARTY THEORETICIAN AND GREY EMINENCE LIKE SUSLOV. ACTOR NOTED THAT ACCORDING TO JOKE CURRENTLY CIRCULATING IN MOSCOW, SUSLOV HAD TO DEMONSTRATE NEW VERSION OF ANTHEM TO THE PLENUM BY SITTING AT A PIANO AND PLAYING AND SINGING IT.

4. ULTIMATE REASON FOR RIVALRY BETWEEN BREZHNEV AND SUSLOV, ASIDE FROM BREZHNEV'S GREATER FLEXIBILITY, WAS ROOTED IN DESIRE OF BOTH TO PLAY PRINCIPAL ROLE IN ARRANGING FOR THE SUCCESSION. SOURCE SUGGESTED THAT PURPOSE BREZHNEV HAD IN MIND IN PROMULGATING NEW CONSTITUTION, SPONSORING PREPARATION OF CODE OF LAWS, CRITICIZING STALIN'S VIOLATION OF LEGALITY IN HIS PLENUM SPEECH, AND APPARENTLY PAVING WAY FOR ASSUMING POST OF CHIEF OF STATE, WAS TO INSURE HIS EVENTUAL RETIREMENT WITH HONOR, THUS BECOMING THE FIRST TOP LEADER SINCE LENIN TO REMAIN IN SOVIET OFFICIAL HISTORY AS AN HONORED POLITICAL LEADER RATHER THAN AS A NON-PERSON.

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5. SOURCE COMMENTED THAT THE AUTHORITIES WERE IMPLEMENTING PROGRAM OF EXCHANGING OLD PASSPORTS FOR NEW ONES UNTIL ABOUT TWO MONTHS AGO, WHEN PASSPORT EXCHANGE PROCEDURES WERE VIRTUALLY SUSPENDED WITHOUT EXPLANATION. HE ALSO ADDED PERSONAL VIEW THAT ABSENCE OF NATIONALITY ON PASSPORTS WOULD ALSO HAVE AN OBVIOUS EFFECT ON JEWS IN USSR BY ELIMINATING IN EFFECT PROOF OF THEIR JEWISH IDENTITY.

6. IN ADDITION, KATUSHEV'S DAUGHTER ALSO REPORTEDLY COMMENTED THAT KATUSHEV AND PODGORNYY HAD ENJOYED A VERY CLOSE PERSONAL AND WORKING RELATIONSHIP AND THAT ANY WEAKENING IN THE POSITION OF ONE HAD THE EFFECT OF WEAKENING THE OTHER'S AS WELL.

7. REGARDING HEALTH OF BREZHNEV, SHE REPORTEDLY STATED THAT HE TAKES A TABLET PUNCTUALLY EVERY HOUR ON THE HOUR, AND IS REMINDED WHENEVER HE FORGETS. THE TABLETS ARE INDIVIDUALLY WRAPPED IN FOIL.
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